

WELCOME TO ROLLING THUNDER

(Mr. LANCE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. LANCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to welcome the veterans from Rolling Thunder to Washington for their Memorial Day events. Veterans like Gus Dante of Branchburg, New Jersey, serve on Rolling Thunder's national board, and every year he and others help organize events here in Washington to commemorate those brave Americans lost in war.

For 30 years, Rolling Thunder's voices and motorcycles have been roaring in Washington, and lawmakers and the new administration are listening. Veterans' issues are front and center in the Halls of Congress, and Secretary Shulkin is reforming the Veterans Administration to restore the trust Rolling Thunder and all veterans demand.

We must keep up the fight for the rights and benefits veterans have earned in the service to the Nation. I am proud to join with Rolling Thunder in introducing two important measures: legislation to end the 40-mile rule for private care through the VA and legislation to display the POW/MIA flag on Federal properties.

Mr. Speaker, on this commemorative Memorial Day weekend, let us all recall those who answered the call of service, especially those who did not return home.

PRESIDENT TRUMP'S BUDGET

(Mr. JEFFRIES asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. JEFFRIES. Mr. Speaker, the Trump budget is a disaster for the very people who the President claims he wants to assist. It is reckless, reprehensible, and regressive.

The Trump budget balances itself on the backs of working families, middle class folks, senior citizens, the poor, the sick, the afflicted, and rural America. The Trump budget fails to invest in education and job training, it fails to invest in transportation and infrastructure, and it fails to invest in research and development. Instead, the Trump budget would cut Head Start, cut Medicaid, cut assistance to nursing homes, and it even cuts Meals on Wheels.

This is all being done simply to pay for tax cuts for the wealthy and the well-off—lifestyles of the rich and shameless. The Trump budget is a disaster, and we are going to do everything possible to vote it down.

PROTECTING YOUNG VICTIMS
FROM SEXUAL ABUSE ACT OF 2017

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill, H.R. 1973.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LANCE). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Virginia?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 352 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 1973.

The Chair appoints the gentleman from Maine (Mr. POLIQUIN) to preside over the Committee of the Whole.

□ 0918

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 1973) to prevent the sexual abuse of minors and amateur athletes by requiring the prompt reporting of sexual abuse to law enforcement authorities, and for other purposes, with Mr. POLIQUIN in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIR. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read for the first time.

The gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE) and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Chair, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Today, we are able to continue our efforts in protecting children by passing legislation to protect young athletes from abuse. The country was shocked at the revelations in recent years concerning the ongoing abuse endured by young athletes at the hands of their coaches and trainers in USA Gymnastics and USA Swimming. These children were betrayed by people they trusted, by people they looked up to, and by people who had a duty to protect them.

That is why I am pleased to be on the floor here today in support of the Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse Act. This bill imposes a requirement to report child abuse for those authorized by U.S. sport national governing bodies, such as USA Gymnastics and USA Swimming, to work with minor athletes or members of these governing bodies.

As is the case with existing Federal mandatory reporting requirements, these individuals will be required to make a prompt report to law enforcement when they learn of facts that give reason to suspect that a child has suffered an incident of child abuse. This provision will ensure that the malfeasance on the part of national governing bodies, like USA Gymnastics, in failing to report allegations of abuse to law enforcement, never occurs again.

The bill further strengthens existing civil remedies for victims of sexual abuse who wish to seek civil damages from their abusers. The bill clarifies that once a victim has established a

harm occurred, the court will presume damages of \$150,000. It relaxes the statute of limitations for victims. The 10-year period will now begin when the victim reasonably discovers the violation or harm, not when it accrues. It also extends the statute of limitations to 10 years after a legal disability is lifted. In other words, minors who are victims will have 10 years from the time they reach adulthood to file.

Finally, the bill expands the authority of the national governing bodies to develop practices, policies, and procedures to prevent sexual abuse, and clarifies the duties of the bodies in developing these practices.

Sports have always been a central aspect of American life. Sports teach our children about focus, teamwork, and leadership, and we should encourage our children to participate, to be a part of healthy competition; but, in doing so, we need to assure we keep these competitive atmospheres safe.

I am pleased to see that the U.S. Olympic Committee has helped to establish a new organization called the Center for Safe Sport, to prevent and respond to emotional, physical, and sexual abuse of young athletes.

I want to commend the gentlewoman from Indiana (Mrs. BROOKS) for introducing this important legislation, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

Mr. Chair, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Chair, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chair, I rise in support of H.R. 1973, the Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse Act, for several reasons.

Most importantly, this is a reasonable bill and is intended to help protect young athletes from abuse and preserve the sanctity of sports associated with the U.S. Olympic Committee, the organization responsible for preparing and training young athletes who might one day represent their country competitively all over the world.

Children deserve to fully enjoy the innocence of their youth—by exploring the curiosities of the world, taking pleasure in the arts, and participating in sports—free from hurt, harm, or danger.

Involvement in sports, and instruction and guidance from adult coaches, can positively influence a young person's growth and development, as well as his or her potential for future success into adulthood.

The sexual abuse of children and youth is intolerable in any text, and we must take appropriate measures to eliminate it from youth sports. Such exploitation betrays and harms young people, sometimes severely and irreparably.

Young people look to adults to protect them and keep them safe. We all have a responsibility to do so.

With H.R. 1973, we have an opportunity to ensure that individuals abide by this duty. Existing Federal law requires certain professionals, such as

doctors, dentists, social workers, psychologists, teachers, and daycare workers, who regularly interact with children, to report suspected abuse to law enforcement.

While our discussion of this legislation today may focus primarily on sexual abuse, H.R. 1973 will require adults who interact with young athletes, in connection to national governing bodies of various sports, to report suspected abuse of any kind.

The need for this legislation is best illustrated by an ongoing scandal of widespread abuse and exploitation of young gymnasts over the course of 20 years within USA Gymnastics, a prominent governing body of the U.S. Olympic Committee.

Many complaints of sexual and emotional abuse went unreported, allowing coaches, instructors, and doctors to repeatedly victimize gymnasts as young as 6 years old. The shocking failure of anyone to report accusations through law enforcement, or even keep track of complaints internally, made it possible for some of these predators to commit horrific acts at several gyms in several states.

For example, a cloud of allegations of abuse surrounded one particular physician in Michigan going back as far as 1997. Regrettably, allegations against him were not reported to law enforcement until recently. Following the first public complaint against him in 2015, more than 100 women have filed complaints accusing him of sexual abuse, and he now faces more than 20 criminal charges in both Federal and State courts.

While the USA Gymnastics scandal is unfortunate, let it be an example and incentive to prevent such pervasive abuse elsewhere.

Accordingly, I encourage my colleagues to join me and my chairman in supporting this important legislation.

Mr. Chair, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Chair, I yield 5 minutes to the gentlewoman from Indiana (Mrs. BROOKS), the chief sponsor of this legislation.

Mrs. BROOKS of Indiana. Mr. Chair, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1973, Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse Act.

Since my time as U.S. attorney in the Southern District of Indiana, I have been committed to battling child exploitation and abuse.

Last year, I was shocked, along with much of the country, when The Indianapolis Star published an investigative piece that exposed troubling allegations of sexual abuse at USA Gymnastics programs across the country.

According to their report, over the last 20 years, at least 368 young people, most Olympic hopefuls, were the victims of sexual abuse at the hands they trusted—coaches, trainers, doctors, and other adults associated with USA Gymnastics. They reported the abuse to USA Gymnastics, but, unfortunately, USA Gymnastics failed, in many cases,

to report those allegations of abuse to law enforcement authorities.

The article shed light on their stories and inspired the legislation that is before us today. According to more than 5,600 pages of USA Gymnastics records, released by The Indy Star, some of the 54 coaches, who had been accused of sexual abuse by young athletes in their care, weren't banned from gymnastics until years after their history of abuse had been reported to and kept in complaint files by USA Gymnastics.

One USA Gymnastics doctor already referenced, Dr. Nassar, stands accused of having abused young women and girls for more than 20 years. More than 100 women have come forward today to share their stories of abuse at his hands.

I understand how challenging it is to share painful stories of sexual abuse, and I am proud of these brave gymnasts who shared their stories: stories that never should have happened, and stories that went inexcusably unanswered.

Their stories demand our action and our attention, not only to provide victims with the justice denied to them for so long but also to protect future generations of Olympic hopefuls.

I want to acknowledge the work of Senator FEINSTEIN of California, who is leading this bill in the Senate, and my colleagues in the bipartisan Women's Caucus, specifically Representative FRANKEL of Florida. I want to commend the chair and the ranking member of the Judiciary Committee, and other members of the committee, for taking the lead in protecting young victims from sexual abuse. Our legislation is an important step forward toward protecting these young athletes.

It addresses that dangerous silence that, as The Indy Star investigative piece showed, plagued USA Gymnastics and other governing bodies of our Olympic sports—a silence that led to more girls being abused, hurt, and harmful coaches, and others, who faced little or no repercussions for their heinous actions.

The abuse should have been, first and foremost, prevented. The system utterly failed when the abuse was not detected and not promptly reported. The U.S. Olympic Committee failed and must do better, and I commend them for their work now in working to do better.

□ 0930

Our bill makes sure that national governing bodies entrusted with the health and well-being of athletes and future Olympians promptly report allegations of sexual abuse and other abuse to law enforcement authorities and implement much stronger policies and procedures to prevent this from happening again.

Most importantly, I want to applaud the victims who shared their story to protect others. I really thank them for their courage and for changing the lives of not only young athletes today, but those in the future.

I urge passage of the bill, and at this time, I thank the chairman and, again, the ranking member for their leadership.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Chair, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. FRANKEL).

Ms. FRANKEL of Florida. Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for yielding.

Today, I rise as the proud cosponsor of this important legislation with my friend and colleague from Indiana, SUSAN BROOKS. I want to thank her for her work on this, the Judiciary leadership, and, of course, Senator DIANE FEINSTEIN.

Mr. Chair, imagine you are a 10-year-old girl and you have a dream. Your dream is to stand on the podium at a summer Olympics with a medal around your neck, and you are saluting the American flag. You are willing to do a lot for that. You are willing to give up all the kinds of things that little girls like to do in their youth. You are willing to spend hours practicing your skills, to get bumps and bruises, but it doesn't stop you. Your parents trust your dream to a coach you call "Grandpa."

Here is the thing: Your dream becomes a nightmare. The Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse Act comes after devastating reports that at least 368 gymnasts have been sexually abused by their coaches and trainers over the course of 20 years. It is almost unimaginable.

Although USA Gymnastics received allegations of abuse, they turned a blind eye. Why? Because it was more important to them to win medals and protect their star coaches.

We have read and heard lots of stories. I am going to give you an example of one, while trying to protect the confidentiality.

By the time she was in seventh grade, our gymnast has developed an eating disorder, coping with the fact that the coach she called Grandpa made her hate her body. By the time she got to college, she had difficulty maintaining relationships, believing that she would never like being touched or physically embraced by others.

Here is a postscript. Over more than a decade, the coach we call Grandpa was able to move from gym to gym abusing girls and recording videos of them. He installed secret cameras in changing rooms and recorded 469 videos of gymnasts, many of whom were naked.

The CHAIR. The time of the gentlewoman has expired.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Chair, I yield the gentlewoman an additional 2 minutes.

Ms. FRANKEL of Florida. Mr. Chair, to continue this, we have to ask this question: Could these young girls have been spared this trauma had proper procedures been in place? And, of course, today our answer is, hopefully, yes.

This legislation is a step in a long journey to change the culture around

sexual abuse. Too often institutions, whether they are our colleges, our military, or, here, in this case, an athletic organization, prioritize preserving their reputations and their brands over the people they protect.

This legislation will require national sports bodies like USA Gymnastics to file reports of abuse as soon as possible. It will establish mandatory training and require the enforcement of policies preventing, reporting, and addressing these kinds of allegations because protecting our athletes must be a priority. Let their dreams come true.

Mr. JOHNSON of Louisiana. Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MEEHAN).

Mr. MEEHAN. Mr. Chair, I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I want to express my admiration and deep appreciation for the gentlewoman from Indiana for her leadership on this most important bill.

This gives us a chance to do something, which is to give a voice to those victims who have suffered in silence and yet had the courage to come forward and allow others to appreciate the depth of the impact that they have suffered, as well as an opportunity for us to assure that this kind of pattern doesn't repeat itself again.

We know it is a pattern because we have, as has been aptly demonstrated by the speakers before me, stories of young women who have been victimized because they enter a trusting relationship—one between a coach and a person in which that power dynamic is so unique, the young person putting their future in the hands—which is exploited by that person superior in the relationship.

So we now have chance to assure that that trust is not further impacted. But it is not just that relationship; it is the long-term implications of it which are so damaging.

Working with the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape, we have come to appreciate victims and how the psychological impacts, including things like substance abuse and other kinds of psychological disorders, last for years, and by the courage of coming forward, it does not necessarily end that impact on them.

In fact, it is not just situations like coach and athlete. All kinds of trusting relationships can create a dynamic—one including something that I am currently working on, massage parlors—in which individuals who put themselves in a compromising position find themselves assaulted.

Most recently, I introduced the Duty to Report Act, addressing that kind of a violation of that trusting relationship.

These are examples of opportunities for us to address, once and for all, the implications of people who are allowed to move from one situation to another when reports come forward and stop. We call that pass the trash.

Today, it is time for our body to put forward the kind of legislation that

will assure that there is a duty to report so, along with due process, there can be an internal investigation to assure and reporting requirements so that these individuals are not able to victimize future young athletes, future people who put themselves in the position of trust.

Mr. Chair, I applaud my colleagues who support this legislation, and I ask that we do so with a strong voice from this House.

The CHAIR. The Committee will rise informally.

The Speaker pro tempore (Mr. PAULSEN) assumed the chair.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed with amendments in which the concurrence of the House is requested, a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 1238. An act to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to make the Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security for Health Affairs responsible for coordinating the efforts of the Department of Homeland Security related to food, agriculture, and veterinary defense against terrorism, and for other purposes.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Committee will resume its sitting.

PROTECTING YOUNG VICTIMS FROM SEXUAL ABUSE ACT OF 2017

The Committee resumed its sitting.

The CHAIR. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. JOHNSON of Louisiana. Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. MESSER).

Mr. MESSER. Mr. Chair, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1973, which aims to strengthen protections against child victims of sexual abuse.

I am a parent. In fact, today, with me, I have my son, Hudson, and one of my daughters, Ava.

Sadly, over the course of the past couple of years, countless stories of young athletes being abused, including in Indiana, have revealed glaring inadequacies in our law. These stories, many about coaches and doctors and trainers and other adults who have abused their positions of authority and trust to exploit young athletes, are appalling and, as a parent, gut wrenching. Every one of these kids deserved better.

This bill aims to ensure that acts of suspected child abuse are promptly reported to an organization's national governing body to make sure that these cases are immediately disclosed to local or Federal law enforcement authorities. Short of this requirement being codified into law, predatory individuals can continue perpetrating horrific crimes against young athletes with relative impunity.

In addition, this bill requires national governing bodies to develop spe-

cific policies and procedures for reporting sexual abuse cases to law enforcement and to keep track of individuals who leave one facility due to complaints and then go to another facility to repeat that abuse elsewhere.

I want to thank my colleague from Indiana (Mrs. BROOKS) for her important work on this legislation—she is my kids' second favorite Member of Congress—and for her hard work on this important bill to protect kids all across America from abuse.

I encourage my colleagues to support the bill.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to yield 5 minutes to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE), the ranking member on the prime subcommittee on the House Judiciary Committee.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Chair, I thank the distinguished ranking member for yielding.

I thank the chairman of this committee and the manager of this bill, and, particularly, I want to express my appreciation to the bipartisan co-sponsors of this legislation—the gentlewoman from Indiana (Mrs. BROOKS), the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. FRANKEL)—for coming together around a concept of continuing to work to protect our children; and where we can find bipartisanship, that is really very special as relates to the message to the American people.

The Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse Act requires that personnel and employees of national governing bodies recognized by the U.S. Olympic Committee report suspected incidents of child abuse, including sexual abuse, to law enforcement. The importance of this is to cease, end, stop, never have it again for those victims—never report or hold it for years and years—who are impacted psychologically and impacted for the rest of their life. Really, that is what has been happening in years past.

This bill is intended to protect young athletes who, with great expectation and excitement and challenge and wonderment and aspirations for the Olympics, in their early years, desire to serve their Nation; because when they put their bodies through this rigorous engagement in sport day after day, week after week, month after month, hour after hour, minute after minute, second after second, and deny themselves other extracurricular activities, they do it for the passion of the sport, for their recognition of excellence, but also to go to the Olympics and make their Nation proud.

□ 0945

And so what we have put them through with respect to not protecting them against sexual assaults severely undermines, again, and irreparably harms them. With H.R. 1973, we have an opportunity to ensure that that never happens again.

The need for this legislation is best illustrated by the ongoing scandal of